

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Thank you, Pastor Davis, for your prayer and blessing. We pray that the spirit of God be with us tonight as we fellowship together. Mr. President, honored members of the City Council, Madam City Administrator, Seat Pleasant City Staff, distinguished guests, and most importantly, citizens and residents of Seat Pleasant a Smart City of Excellence.

Today, I offer this year's State of the City address as the crescendo of all we have accomplished this past year of 2017 and the endless possibilities of this coming year, 2018. I can confidently stand before you and tell you that the State of the City of Seat Pleasant is strong.

We walked in purpose, and stepped boldly through unfamiliar terrain, on a road that at times was so difficult to navigate that a lesser City would have folded and faltered. But, not our great City of Excellence! When obstacles barred our direct course, we turned to and relied upon our faith, and never lost our way forward toward a providential tomorrow.

This statement brings to mind the children's classic, "Alice in Wonderland" written by Lewis Carroll. As most of you know, Alice becomes lost on a journey and comes to a fork in the road where she sees a Cheshire cat perched on a tree limb. "Which road do

I take? she asked. “Where do you want to go?” responded the Cheshire cat. “I don’t know,” Alice answered. “Then,” said the cat, it doesn’t matter.”

Well, unlike Alice and many cities in this great nation, we are not lost. We know where we are going and we know how to get there. We leave others to take the well-trodden path while we boldly blaze new trails. We leave others to think that where they are going doesn’t matter while we trudge along on our journey towards a Smart City of Excellence.

Ezra 10:4 teaches us to be of good courage and do it! And with the embodiment of that verse, we have indeed exemplified the courage to secure a prosperous future for every citizen of this great community.

In 2017, I, along with our venerable city council and key city employees, spent countless hours working together to define and refine our goals and priorities and chart the path for Seat Pleasant’s economic and community prosperity. The result of these efforts was the City Council’s adoption of the **STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF SEAT PLEASANT FOR FISCAL YEARS 2017-2019.**

Our Strategic Goals are as follows:

- First, increase economic development
- Second, create a Smart City

- Third, develop a stronger financial portfolio
- Fourth, improve neighborhood infrastructure
- Fifth, decrease all categories of crime
- Sixth, provide workforce opportunities
- and finally, expand health awareness and cultural and leisure activities

Let us reason together regarding these transformational goals:

With respect to the goal of increasing economic development, the City established a separate department exclusively focused on the redevelopment of our local economy. This branch is charged with adopting innovative technologies, transitioning Seat Pleasant from a bedroom community to a data driven economy and improving the quality of life for city residents. Under my direction, and with the support of the City Council, this department has established programs to eliminate blight and attract businesses to our new Smart City environment which will ultimately create new jobs.

In the past two fiscal years combined, the City received \$155,000 in grant funding. Amazingly, our new and improved Grants Management Division secured over \$350,000 in grant funding **IN JUST 8 MONTHS**. This Division should be commended for their remarkable performance and productivity.

To further our economic vitality, we created the Seat Pleasant Housing Trust Fund to acquire, renovate and resell vacant properties throughout our City. Our forward-thinking City Council approved this \$1.5-million-dollar fund and the City's Leadership Team got

to work. To date, we have acquired properties on Addison Road, 71st Avenue, Seat Pleasant Drive and Foote Street respectively.

As most of us are aware, 6224 Foote Street was the site of a deadly fire which claimed the lives of two people. Prior to this fire, persons seeking shelter from the cold had regularly inhabited this vacant property, along with many others. After this tragic loss of life, we held a press conference to shed light on the ongoing problem of vacant and abandoned properties in the hands of financial institutions that continue to hold them as real-estate-owned (REO) properties on their balance sheet. These financial institutions allow vacant houses, such as this one, to languish - causing blight, dilapidation and despondency in many urban communities. These properties, collectively, are a public nuisance which threaten the health and safety of our community and lowers the property value of neighboring homes.

We declared war on these institutions and fought hard to claim these properties for our revitalization efforts. I am thoroughly proud to announce to the community that we have negotiated the deal, and as of December 15, 2017, we have purchased that same property from one of the largest banks in the world **FOR ONLY \$10.00**. We must take responsibility for the welfare of our own neighborhoods and never let them fall prey to greedy vultures again.

The Book of Proverbs teaches us that you should trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Indeed, our straight path has been dictated and directed by the Lord. As we canvas new frontiers and put an eye toward our future, we seek to attract a younger population through our millennial engagement strategy. We have created the Seat Pleasant Smart Buy Program to encourage younger people to move to Seat Pleasant. It is modeled after a similar program offered by the State of Maryland.

Let me share with you how this program works. The City will sell homes to individuals who have unpaid student loan debt. Once they purchase the home, the City will incorporate their student loan debt into their mortgages and pay off their student loan by 20% each year for 5 years. If the homebuyer makes this their principal residence for 5 years, the City will have paid off their student loan debt and they will be free from that tremendous financial burden.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Through Christ who strengthens us, we have been given the power, the love, and the sound mind to accomplish what we will. With guidance from our City Council, we plan to bring back high-quality establishments to Seat Pleasant to increase commerce and provide necessary services. The last major development occurred 30 years ago

with the building of the Addison Plaza Shopping Center. This development would not have happened without the tenacious spirit of my friend and mentor, the Honorable Henry Arrington, who is with us here tonight. Please join me in acknowledging our former mayor.

Since that time, however, we have lost certain national establishments that have resulted in significant job displacement for many of our residents and contributed to our 16% unemployment rate. The loss was very surprising to us all and affected our regional community in ways that had to be addressed. Who among us would take on the fight except ourselves?

We cannot sit back idly while another so-called inner-city community is abandoned by those who don't care about us. **WE ARE NOT WHAT THEY THINK WE ARE!** We will not stand to be branded as an "inner Beltway" area and treated as such. As a community, we will stand up for our right to work, better paying and high-quality job growth, and healthy fresh food options for those who need it most.

To that end, I am pleased to announce that we have established a partnership with the Good Foods Market to bring a **NEW COMMUNITY-BASED GROCERY STORE** to our beloved City of Seat Pleasant. We look forward to announcing a firm launch date and a grand opening before the end of the year. We are pleased to be joined this evening by the principals of the Good Foods Market. Will you please stand to be recognized?

We heard our residents' plea for increased access to healthier food options and we delivered. Attracting retailers who stock healthy food is one way we plan to improve the health of our community.

As a Smart City of Excellence, Seat Pleasant is focused on maintaining and improving the health outcomes of its citizens and employees. This year, I am pleased to announce the Seat Pleasant Smart Health Hypertension Initiative in collaboration with the World Hypertension League and Harrisburg University.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, African Americans are 40% more likely to have high blood pressure than other ethnicities and are less likely to have it under control. Hypertension is a leading cause of strokes as well as heart and kidney disease in our community. As a city, we must take bold and smart steps to address this health challenge. To tackle this issue, we secured a grant from healthcare giant, Kaiser Permanente. This initiative includes advisory services from hypertension specialists, doctors and other medical professionals and education and training services for residents.

I have enlisted my good friend Robert St. Thomas, who is here with us tonight, to lead our efforts in confronting this terrible issue for our community along with our other strategic partners.

Now, I'd like to discuss our continued work towards developing ourselves into a Smart City.

This is the dawn of a new day. And what the 21st century demands is a new type of city; a city that MUST use internet-connected devices and sensors to gather and analyze information. This will support modern municipal management, including decision-making, improving infrastructure, efficiency, convenience and the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Becoming a smart city is a very complex and transformational process - new ways of thinking must be adopted, and new approaches to doing things must be developed and implemented. The rigors of advancing a small city like Seat Pleasant to be a Smart City of Excellence would have deterred many city governments, but not ours.

We have harnessed the power of technology to cultivate sustainable urban development and invigorate our local economy. As a Smart City, Seat Pleasant now offers services that are better, faster and personalized, making it a "City for Me" using information and communication technology. This Smart City initiative employs cloud-based "internet of things" (IOT) and cognitive computing capabilities that collect Big Data and are affordable by Small Town USA, where 60% of those towns have populations of 5,000 or less.

Developed by our strategic software partner, IBM, the city is slowly and methodically integrating the Intelligent Operations Center capabilities into the day-to-day operations of each department. The IOC integrates systems providing visibility to our city, and helps us to optimize operational efficiency. Integrated data visualization, real-time collaboration, and deep analytics help city agencies prepare for problems, plan for growth, and coordinate and manage response efforts. As a result, municipal leaders can effectively deliver services in a more sustainable fashion, enhancing the ongoing efficiency of city operations while protecting citizens and driving economic growth.

Here with us tonight is Charles Niphadkabin (Ni-FED-Ki-Bin), a Senior Consultant representing IBM our software strategic partner. Help me in acknowledging him this evening.

Additionally, I wish to acknowledge Mohamed Abdelhameid, whom I successfully stole from IBM and now serves as Seat Pleasant's Intelligent Operations Center Lead Manager.

Seat Pleasant is designated as a Smart City with an Innovation Village. With respect to Innovation Villages, they will facilitate the creation and commercialization of new ideas and support metropolitan economies by growing jobs in ways that leverage their distinct economic attributes. The purpose of the Village is to attract and retain millennials and creative startup companies. These villages build on and revalue the intrinsic qualities of the City's density, authenticity, and proximity to vibrant places. The Seat Pleasant

Innovation Village will offer the following services, to include, but not limited to, an Accelerator for purpose-driven companies and a new entrepreneurship center. Given the proximity of many villages to low-income neighborhoods and the large number of sub-baccalaureate jobs many provide, developing a village in Seat Pleasant can help connect disadvantaged populations to new employment and educational opportunities.

This is TRUE SOCIAL JUSTICE for our people! Equitable access to pecuniary resources AND inclusion for all members of society!

Additionally, the Seat Pleasant Innovation Village will include housing for our seniors and micro-units for our millennials, thereby promoting and encouraging human connection across generations that leads to enriching social, cultural and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Seat Pleasant is pleased to join with Innovation Village Baltimore, and the Mount Royal Community Development Corporation in the strategic planning of the Seat Pleasant Innovation Village. A feasibility study has just been completed for our review and will be included in our City's first ever comprehensive Master Plan.

The Seat Pleasant Innovation Village will be part of a regional collaborative effort that will include Richmond, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland and York, PA.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 teaches us that he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. Essentially, farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest. Well, we chose to harvest

when things were not perfect. This is what our pioneering spirit led us to accomplish. We did not let our lack of sustained commitment from outside stakeholders or collaborators stagnate us. Instead, we forged ahead with our endeavors and were blessed to establish collaborative partnerships along the way. These entities advanced our smart city thinking, provided platforms for sharing knowledge, expertise and solutions. With their guidance, we were able to emerge as the nation's first and only authentic small smart city, implementing technological solutions aimed at empowering citizens and improving operational efficiency.

Indeed, we have led the pack in providing technology that improves outcomes, optimizes service delivery, strengthens security and safety and promotes the resilience and stimulation of our local economy.

As I stated earlier, we have not acted alone. Our partnerships with Apple, IBM, the University of Oklahoma, Harrisburg University in Pennsylvania, and Prince George's Community College, just to name a few, have allowed us to attain new heights on our journey to a Smart City of Excellence. The University of Oklahoma for example has committed to the following:

- The development of a Smart City Accreditation
- The creation of a Smart City Evaluation tool
- Development of a Public Engagement Department
- Grants Search and Writing Assistance
- And finally, a technical assistance center at Innovation Village

Prince George's Community College has agreed to provide, through their smart city workforce curriculum, training to our residents and others that will enable them to become more marketable and thrive in this ever-changing digital age.

With us here tonight is my good friend, Dr. Charlene M. Dukes, President of the Prince George's Community College. Help me acknowledging her this evening.

Our city has been enriched by these collaborative partnerships. However, the partnership that interests us the most is what we hope to establish with our residents. In order to assure that we continue to meet their needs, we are creating a Smart City Advisory Committee composed of our residents. We believe that it is paramount that we request the participation and engagement of the individuals whose lives are impacted daily by our planning and policy decisions.

I'd now like to shift gears for a moment and provide you with the financial picture of our city. Our fiscal year concluded on June 30, 2017, with a fund balance of \$4.1 million. This represented an increase of 46.6 % to prior year reserves of \$2.8 million. Accountability to our taxpayers requires the leaders of this administration to effectively and efficiently manage the resources they have entrusted to us. This outstanding increase in our reserves is a result of our budgetary discipline and financial ingenuity, which the Smart City Initiative will continue to develop as we grow larger and enhance services for us all.

Many of the provisions of the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017, just signed into law by President Donald Trump, will adversely impact our city and residents. The elimination of certain tax incentives will abolish tax write-offs that encourage home ownership. This will affect our City greatly because 61% of our housing stock is owned by our citizens.

We will be proposing a plan to our City Council and county and state governments that we hope will encourage our citizens to participate in the revitalization of their own community. We will be proposing to the City Council that we offer a dollar-for-dollar Smart City Tax Credit to tax payers who contribute to local government sponsored programs.

Now, let's discuss the My Seat Pleasant Mobile App!

This mobile app was launched on August 17, 2017, on Kevin Durant Day in the City of Seat Pleasant, and provides another avenue in which we can engage, educate and empower our residents. This app is accessible from any Apple or Android device. Unlike apps from other governments, this smart software is interactive and engaging, and allows our residents to remain connected with our government, receive status updates and report issues in real time. This application also includes an interactive, natural language question & answer feature powered by IBM Watson. This application is an example of social justice at work, where we level the playing field for citizens and government alike.

Now, I would like to proudly report on our public safety efforts.

The late Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, once said, “Safety and security don’t just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.”

This is such a powerful and meaningful quote because it recognizes the fundamental role law enforcement agencies fulfill in our society. Our officers here in Seat Pleasant are committed to protecting the lives, the rights, and the property of our citizens.

It remains an ongoing goal to maintain a police force that engenders the highest trust among the population. During my tenure, I have seen growth in morale and accountability. This has led to a reduction in police misconduct complaints and an increase in our community engagement efforts.

Sadly in 2016, our police department received 34 police misconduct complaints. However, in 2017, because of increased accountability, training, smart technology, and effective leadership, our city received **ONLY 1 POLICE MISCONDUCT COMPLAINT.** This equals a 97% reduction in police misconduct complaints. Police in the African American community must police the streets in the spirit of service and social justice, realizing that there are human beings on the other side of the ticket, the arrest or even, God forbid, the gun.

As we continue to elevate our efforts and strategies to rid our City of crime, we are proud to share that the policing efforts of the Seat Pleasant Police Department over the last year has resulted in:

- Seizure of 19 illegal firearms from our community
- 2,800 traffic stops
- Seizure of nearly 3,300 grams of illegal drugs and controlled substances with an estimated street value of over \$66,000

In 2017, our police officers made over 260 criminal arrests. Data driven solutions and Smart policing practices have led to more criminal arrests and crimes being solved. These efforts are making our City a safer place to live, work, play and pray. Stronger Community policing is a high priority on our list of goals for 2018.

Over the past fifteen months, our team of dedicated officers have worked tirelessly to build a SMART police department. Recently, we launched the Seat Pleasant Unmanned Drone Aircraft Program. As a result, our police department is now viewed as a regional asset for both public safety and national security matters. I am proud to say that under my leadership, Seat Pleasant has become the **FIRST** and only city in the country to obtain the security clearance to fly police drones in the No-Fly Zone over the nation's capital, optimizing the city's ability to provide better safety to the region during times of uncertainty. This elite status allows our department to obtain aerial footage of crime

scenes, national security situations, and other public safety concerns remotely. That information is then transmitted to our IOC where data and intelligence are analyzed to determine how to provide better, faster, and personalized services.

Recently, we were successfully awarded a \$104,000 Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. Our agency is one of only three departments statewide to receive this award. There were thousands of police departments nationwide that attempted to obtain this funding. Therefore, I am extremely proud that our police department ranked highest out of ALL Maryland law enforcement agencies that applied. Through this funding source, we will see continued growth with our current community engagement programs, to include the Citizens for Public Safety Advisory Council (CPAC) and the Senior Awareness Program.

I would like to recognize CPAC and its leadership for its presence here tonight. They are our citizen-partners in public safety. Our engagement with these types of organizations have and will continue to allow us to tailor our police department to meet the needs and wants of this community. I am happy to report that this year, our city will develop its first National Police Activities League and Law Enforcement Explorers Program. These two youth enrichment and engagement initiatives are geared to community members who are ages 8 to 20. Our police department is committed to engaging and building relationships with residents from every age group.

In continuing with that theme of collaboration, I am pleased to be joined tonight by my colleagues from Capitol Heights and Fairmount Heights, who agree with me that we must take a regional approach to improving citizen-centric services. We have further agreed to share ideas, resources and technological advancements to improve the quality of life for our respective residents. Our survival is dependent on us working together. With shrinking federal, state and county resources, we must look to each other to bring about social justice, equity and inclusion for all our residents.

Please help me in acknowledging the Honorable Marnita King, Mayor of Capitol Heights, and the Honorable Lillie Thompson-Martin, Mayor of Fairmount Heights, who are here with us this evening.

Fellow Seat Pleasant residents, this is our journey. A journey toward a smart and bold new frontier of endless possibilities during this next age of innovation and transformation. Our work will embody the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Yes, we believe that we are all created equally and therefore government must serve all her people equally, with justice and inclusion for all.

The eyes of the world are now turning toward Seat Pleasant. Top universities, Silicon Valley, United Nations and even foreign countries are assessing our model of Smart

City Governance. They are embracing our citizen-centric focus. They are learning how we engage, educate and empower our residents in a true democracy. Yes, they are witnesses of our movement and commitment to our people.

However, we must guard ourselves against those who seek to steer us off course. We must not allow the weights of wickedness, greed, jealousy, corruption and selfishness detour us from our outcomes of social justice, equity and inclusion.

We are reminded through biblical scripture in the book of Hebrews the 12th chapter and the first verse, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Yes, there are many witnesses watching and evaluating our every move. Some are cheering for our success while others are hoping for our demise. But we will endure like good soldiers in the army of love and faith. **WE WILL NOT GIVE UP, WE WILL REMAIN FOCUSED, AND WE WILL REACH OUR DESTINATION IN THE MIGHTY NAME OF JESUS THE CHRIST OUR LORD AND THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD!**

The critics will talk negatively about how long it is taking us to get to our destination of a fully integrated smart city but I remind us all as it is written in the book of Ecclesiastes 9:11 “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to

the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

WELL, SEAT PLEASANT THIS IS OUR TIME. THIS IS THE TIME WHERE OUR JOURNEY WILL MOVE US FROM BEING THE TAIL TO BEING THE HEAD. THIS IS THE TIME WHERE OUR JOURNEY WILL MOVE US FROM BEINxc d57o8tcu cu licvrtgG THE BORROWER TO BEING THE LENDER. THIS IS OUR TIME WHERE OUR JOURNEY WILL MOVE US FROM BEING SECOND CLASS TO FIRST CLASS. THIS IS OUR TIME WHERE OUR JOURNEY WILL MOVE US FROM THE VALLEY OF DESPAIR TO THE MOUNTAIN OF HOPE. THIS IS OUR TIME WHERE OUR JOURNEY WILL MOVE US FROM THE DESERT OF HATE TO THE OASIS OF LOVE. SEAT PLEASANT! THIS IS OUR TIME.

To that end, I ask that you join the City Council and I on this journey. May God bless each of you and may God bless Seat Pleasant: A SMART City of Excellence!!!

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